

## THE FULLNESS OF SPIRITUAL ACTION

glorifies his knowledge and unites it with the eternal delight of the Spirit in its self and its manifestation ; this perfects too his personality in the superperson of the divine Purusha and makes his natural being and action one with eternal beauty, eternal harmony, eternal love and Ananda.

But all this change means a total passing from the lower human to the higher divine nature. It is a lifting of our whole being or at least of the whole mental being that wills, knows and feels beyond what we are into some highest spiritual consciousness, some satisfying fullest power of existence, some deepest widest delight of the spirit. And this may well be possible by a transcendence of our present natural life, it may well be possible in some celestial state beyond the earthly existence or still beyond in a supracosmic superconscience ; it may happen by transition to an absolute and infinite power and status of the Spirit. But while we are here in the body, here in life, here in action, what in this change becomes of the lower nature ? For at present all our activities are determined in their trend and shape by the nature, and this Nature here is the nature of the three gunas, and in all natural being and in all natural activities there is the triple guna, tamas with its ignorance and inertia, rajas with its kinesis and action, its passion and grief and perversion, sattwa with its light and happiness, and the bondage of these things. And granted that the soul becomes superior in the self to the three gunas,

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

how does it escape in its instrumental nature from their working and result and bondage? For even the man of knowledge, says the Gita, must act according to his nature. To feel and bear the reactions of the gunas in the outer manifestation, but to be free from them and superior in the observing conscious self behind is not sufficient; for it leaves still a dualism of freedom and subjection, a contradiction between what we are within and what we are without, between our self and our power, what we know ourselves to be and what we will and do. Where is the release here, where the full elevation and transformation to the higher spiritual nature, the immortal Dharma, the law proper to the infinite purity and power of a divine being? If this change cannot be effected while in the body, then so it must be said, that the whole nature cannot be transformed and there must remain an unreconciled duality until the mortal type of existence drops off like a discarded shell from the spirit. But in that case the gospel of works cannot well be the right or at least cannot be the ultimate gospel: a perfect quiescence or at least as perfect a quiescence as possible, a progressive Sannyasa and renunciation of works would seem still to be the true counsel of perfection, —as indeed the Mayavadin contends, who says that the Gita's way is no doubt the right way so long as we remain in action, but still all works are an illusion and quiescence the highest path. To act in this spirit is well, but only as a transition to a renuncia-

## THE FULLNESS OF SPIRITUAL ACTION

tion of all works, to cessation, to an absolute quiescence.

This is the difficulty which the Gita has still to meet in order to justify works to the seeker after the Spirit. Otherwise it must say to Arjuna, "Act temporarily in this fashion, but afterwards seek the higher way of renunciation of works." But on the contrary it has said that not the cessation of works, but renunciation of desire is the better way; it has spoken of the action of the liberated man, *mukṭasya karma*. It has even insisted on doing all actions, *sarvâni karmâni, kṛitsnaḥkrit*; it has said that in whatever way the perfected Yogin lives and acts, he lives and acts in God. This can only be, if the nature also in its dynamics and workings becomes divine, a power imperturbable, intangible, inviolate, pure and untroubled by the reactions of the inferior Prakriti. How and by what steps is this most difficult transformation to be effected? What is this last secret of the soul's perfection? what the principle or the process of this transmutation of our human and earthly nature?

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## DEVA AND ASURA\*

The practical difficulty of the change from the ignorant and shackled normal nature of man to the dynamic freedom of a divine and spiritual being will be apparent if we ask ourselves, more narrowly, how the transition can be effected from the fettered embarrassed functioning of the three qualities to the infinite action of the liberated man who is no longer subject to the gunas. The transition is indispensable; for it is clearly laid down that he must be above or else without the three gunas, *trigunâtîta, nistraigunya*. On the other hand it is no less clearly, no less emphatically laid down that in every natural existence here on earth the three gunas are there in their inextricable working and it is even said that all action of man or creature or force is merely the action of these three modes upon each other, a functioning in which one or other predominates and the rest modify its operation and results, *guna guneshu vartante*. How then can there be another dynamic and kinetic nature or any other kind of works? To act is to be subject to the three qualities of Nature; to be beyond these conditions of her working is to be silent in the spirit. The Ishwara, the Supreme who is master of all her works and functions and guides and determines them by his divine will, is indeed

\* Gita XVI.

above this mechanism of quality, not touched or limited by her modes; but still it would seem that he acts always through them, always shapes by the power of the swabhava and through the psychological machinery of the gunas. These three are fundamental properties of Prakriti, necessary operations of the executive Nature force which takes shape here in us and the Jiva himself is only a portion of the Divine in this Prakriti. If then the liberated man still does works, still moves in the kinetic movement, it must be so that he moves and acts, in Nature and by the limitation of her qualities, subject to their reactions, not, in so far as the natural part of him persists, in the freedom of the Divine. But the Gita has said exactly the opposite, that the liberated Yogin is delivered from the guna reactions and whatever he does, however he lives, moves and acts in God, in the power of his freedom and immortality, in the law of the supreme eternal Infinite, *sarvathâ vartamâno'pi sa yogî mayi vartate*. There seems here to be a contradiction, an impasse.

But this is only when we knot ourselves up in the rigid logical oppositions of the analytic mind, not when we look freely and subtly at the nature of spirit and at the spirit in Nature. What moves the world is not really the modes of Prakriti,—these are only the lower aspect, the mechanism of our normal nature. The real motive power is a divine spiritual Will which uses at present these inferior conditions, but is itself not limited, not dominated, not mecha-

nised, as is the human will, by the gunas. No doubt, since these modes are so universal in their action, they must proceed from something inherent in the power of the Spirit; there must be powers in the divine Will-force from which these aspects of Prakriti have their origin. For everything in the lower normal nature is derived from the higher spiritual power of being of the Purushottama, *mattah pravartate*; it does not come into being *de novo* and without a spiritual cause. Something in the essential power of the spirit there must be from which the sattwic light and satisfaction, the rajasic kinesis, the tamasic inertia of our nature are derivations and of which they are the imperfect or degraded forms. But once we get back to these sources in their purity above this imperfection and degradation of them in which we live we shall find that these motions put on a quite different aspect as soon as we begin to live in the spirit. Being and action and the modes of being and action become altogether different things, far above their present limited appearance.

For what is behind this troubled kinesis of the cosmos with all its clash and struggle? What is it that when it touches the mind, when it puts on mental values, creates the reactions of desire, striving, straining, error of will, sorrow, sin, pain? It is a will of the spirit in movement, it is a large divine will in action which is not touched by these things; it is a power\* of the free and infinite con-

\* *Tapas, chit-shakti.*

scious Godhead which has no desire because it exercises universal possession and a spontaneous Ananda of its movement. Wearied by no striving and straining, it enjoys a free mastery of its means and its objects; misled by no error of the will, it holds a knowledge of self and things which is the source of its mastery and its Ananda: overcome by no sorrow, sin or pain, it has the joy and purity of its being and the joy and purity of its power. The soul that lives in God acts by this spiritual will and not by the normal will of the unliberated mind: its kinesis takes place by this spiritual force and not by the rajasic mode of Nature, precisely because it no longer lives in the lower movement to which that deformation belongs, but has got back in the divine nature to the pure and perfect sense of the kinesis.

And again what is behind the inertia of Nature, behind this Tamas which, when complete, makes her action like the blind driving of a machine, a mechanical impetus unobservant of anything except the groove in which it is set to spin and not conscious even of the law of that motion,—this Tamas that turns cessation of the accustomed action into death and disintegration and becomes in the mind a power for inaction and ignorance? This tamas is an obscurity which mistranslates, we may say, into inaction of power and inaction of knowledge the Spirit's eternal principle of calm and repose—the repose which the Divine never loses even while he acts, the

eternal repose which supports his integral action of knowledge and the force of his creative will both there in its own infinities and here in an apparent limitation of its working and self-awareness. The peace of the Godhead is not a disintegration of energy or a vacant inertia; it would keep all that Infinity has known and done gathered up and concentratedly conscious in an omnipotent silence even if the Power everywhere ceased for a time actively to know and create. The Eternal does not need to sleep or rest; he does not get tired and flag; he has no need of a pause to refresh and recreate his exhausted energies; for his energy is inexhaustibly the same, indefatigable and infinite. The Godhead is calm and at rest in the midst of his action; and on the other hand his very cessation of action would retain in it the full power and all the potentialities of his kinesis. The liberated soul enters into this calm and participates in the eternal repose of the spirit. This is known to every one who has had any taste at all of the joy of liberation, that it contains an eternal power of calm. And that profound tranquillity can remain in the very heart of action, can persevere in the most violent motion of forces. There may be an impetuous flood of thought, doing, will, movement, an overflowing rush of love, the emotion of the self-existent spiritual ecstasy at its strongest intensity, and that may extend itself to a fiery and forceful spiritual enjoyment of things and beings in the world and in the ways of Nature, and yet this



tranquillity and repose would be behind the surge and in it, always conscious of its depths, always the same. The calm of the liberated man is not an indolence, incapacity, insensibility, inertia; it is full of immortal power, capable of all action, attuned to deepest delight, open to profoundest love and compassion and to every manner of intensest Ananda.

And so too beyond the inferior light and happiness of that purest quality of Nature, Sattwa, the power that makes for assimilation and equivalence, right knowledge and right dealing, fine harmony, firm balance, right law of action, right possession and brings so full a satisfaction to the mind, beyond this highest thing in the normal nature, admirable in itself so far as it goes and while it can be maintained, but precarious, secured by limitation, dependent on rule and condition, there is at its high and distant source a greater light and bliss free in the free spirit. That is not limited nor dependent on limitation or rule or condition but self-existent and unalterable, not the result of this or that harmony amid the discords of our nature but the fount of harmony and able to create whatever harmony it will. That is a luminous spiritual and in its native action a direct supramental force of knowledge, *jyotih*, not our modified and derivative mental light, *prakâṣa*. That is the light and bliss of widest self-existence, spontaneous self-knowledge, intimate universal identity, deepest self-interchange, not of acquisition, assimilation, adjustment and laboured equivalence.

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

That light is full of a luminous spiritual will and there is no gulf or disparateness between its knowledge and its action. That delight is not our paler mental happiness, *sukham*, but a profound concentrated intense self-existent bliss extended to all that our being does, envisages, creates, a fixed divine rapture, Ananda. The liberated soul participates more and more profoundly in this light and bliss and grows the more perfectly into it, the more integrally it unites itself with the Divine. And while among the gunas of the lower Nature there is a necessary disequilibrium, a shifting inconstancy of measures and a perpetual struggle for domination, the greater light and bliss, calm, will of kinesis of the Spirit do not exclude each other, are not at war, are not even merely in equilibrium, but each an aspect of the two others and in their fullness all are inseparable and one. Our mind when it approaches the Divine may seem to enter into one to the exclusion of another, may appear for instance to achieve calm to the exclusion of kinesis of action, but that is because we approach him first through the selecting spirit in the mind. Afterwards when we are able to rise above even the spiritual mind, we can see that each divine power contains all the rest and can get rid of this initial error.\*

\* The account given here of the supreme spiritual and supramental forms of highest Nature action corresponding to the gunas is not derived from the Gita, but introduced from spiritual experience. The Gita does not describe in any detail the action of the highest Nature, *rahasyam uttamam*; it leaves that for the seeker to discover

## DEVA AND ASURA

We see then that action is possible without the subjection of the soul to the normal degraded functioning of the modes of Nature. That functioning depends on the mental, vital and physical limitation into which we are cast; it is a deformation, an incapacity, a wrong or depressed value imposed on us by the mind and life in matter. When we grow into the spirit, this dharma or inferior law of Nature is replaced by the immortal dharma of the spirit; there is the experience of a free immortal action, a divine illimitable knowledge, a transcendent power, an unfathomable repose. But still there remains the question of the transition; for there must be a transition, a proceeding by steps, since nothing in God's workings in this world is done by an abrupt action without procedure or basis. We have the thing we seek in us, but we have in practice to evolve it out of the inferior forms of our nature.\* Therefore in the action of the modes itself there must be some means, some leverage, some *point d'appui*, by which we can effect this transformation. The

by his own spiritual experience. It only points out the nature of the high sattwic temperament and action through which this supreme mystery has to be reached and insists at the same time on the overpassing of Sattwa and transcendence of the three gunas.

\* This is from the point of the view of our nature ascending upwards by self-conquest, effort and discipline. There must also intervene more and more a descent of the divine Light, Presence and Power into the being to transform it; otherwise the change at the point of culmination and beyond it cannot take place. That is why there comes in as the last movement the necessity of an absolute self-surrender.

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

Gita finds it in the full development of the sattwic guna till that in its potent expansion reaches a point at which it can go beyond itself and disappear into its source. The reason is evident, because sattwa is a power of light and happiness, a force that makes for calm and knowledge, and at its highest point it can arrive at a certain reflection, almost a mental identity with the spiritual light and bliss from which it derives. The other two gunas cannot get this transformation, rajas into the divine kinetic will or tamas into the divine repose and calm, without the intervention of the sattwic power in Nature. The principle of inertia will always remain an inert inaction of power or an incapacity of knowledge until its ignorance disappears in illumination and its torpid incapacity is lost in the light and force of the omnipotent divine will of repose. Then only can we have the supreme calm. Therefore tamas must be dominated by sattwa. The principle of rajas for the same reason must remain always a restless, troubled, feverish or unhappy working because it has not right knowledge; its native movement is a wrong and perverse action, perverse through ignorance. Our will must purify itself by knowledge; it must get more and more to a right and luminously informed action before it can be converted into the divine kinetic will. That again means the necessity of the intervention of sattwa. The sattwic quality is a first mediator between the higher and the lower nature. It must indeed at a certain point transform or escape

## DEVA AND ASURA

from itself and break up and dissolve into its source ; its conditioned derivative seeking light and carefully constructed action must change into the free direct dynamics and spontaneous light of the spirit. But meanwhile a high increase of sattwic power delivers us largely from the tamasic and the rajasic disqualification ; and its own disqualification, once we are not pulled too much downward by rajas and tamas, can be surmounted with a greater ease. To develop sattwa till it becomes full of spiritual light and calm and happiness is the first condition of this preparatory discipline of the nature.

That, we shall find, is the whole intention of the remaining chapters of the Gita. But first it prefaces the consideration of this enlightening movement by a distinction between two kinds of being, the Deva and the Asura ; for the Deva is capable of a high self-transforming sattwic action, the Asura incapable. We must see what is the object of this preface and the precise bearing of this distinction. The general nature of all human beings is the same, it is a mixture of the three gunas ; it would seem then that in all there must be the capacity to develop and strengthen the sattwic element and turn it upward towards the heights of the divine transformation. That our ordinary turn is actually towards making our reason and will the servants of our rajasic or tamasic egoism, the ministers of our restless and ill-balanced kinetic desire or our self-indulgent indolence and static inertia, can only be, one would imagine, a

temporary characteristic of our undeveloped spiritual being, a rawness of its imperfect evolution and must disappear when our consciousness rises in the spiritual scale. But we actually see that men, at least men above a certain level, fall very largely into two classes, those who have a dominant force of sattwic nature turned towards knowledge, self-control, beneficence, perfection and those who have a dominant force of rajasic nature turned towards egoistic greatness, satisfaction of desire, the indulgence of their own strong will and personality which they seek to impose on the world, not for the service of man or God, but for their own pride, glory and pleasure. These are the human representatives of the Devas and Danavas or Asuras, the Gods and the Titans. This distinction is a very ancient one in Indian religious symbolism. The fundamental idea of the Rig Veda is a struggle between the Gods and their dark opponents, between the Masters of Light, sons of Infinity, and the children of Division and Night, a battle in which man takes part and which is reflected in all his inner life and action. This was also a fundamental principle of the religion of Zoroaster. The same idea is prominent in later literature. The Ramayana is in its ethical intention the parable of an enormous conflict between the Deva in human form and the incarnate Rakshasa, between the representative of a high culture and Dharma and a huge unbridled force and gigantic civilisation of the exaggerated Ego.

## DEVA AND ASURA

The Mahabharata, of which the Gita is a section, takes for its subject a lifelong clash between human Devas and Asuras, the men of power, sons of the Gods, who are governed by the light of a high ethical Dharma and others who are embodied Titans, the men of power who are out for the service of their intellectual, vital and physical ego. The ancient mind, more open than ours to the truth of things behind the physical veil, saw behind the life of man great cosmic Powers or beings representative of certain turns or grades of the universal Shakti, divine, titanic, gigantic, demoniac, and men who strongly represented in themselves these types of nature were themselves considered as Devas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Pisachas. The Gita for its own purposes takes up this distinction and develops the difference between these two kinds of beings, *dwau bhûta-sargau*. It has spoken previously of the nature which is Asuric and Rakshasic and obstructs God-knowledge, salvation and perfection; it now contrasts it with the Daivic nature which is turned to these things.

Arjuna, says the Teacher, is of the Deva nature. He need not grieve with the thought that by acceptance of battle and slaughter he will be yielding to the impulses of the Asura. The action on which all turns, the battle which Arjuna has to fight with the incarnate Godhead as his charioteer at the bidding of the Master of the world in the form of the Time-Spirit, is a struggle to establish the kingdom of the

Dharma, the empire of Truth, Right and Justice. He himself is born in the Deva kind; he has developed in himself the sattwic being, until he has now come to a point at which he is capable of a high transformation and liberation from the *traigunya* and therefore even from the sattwic nature. The distinction between the Deva and the Asura is not comprehensive of all humanity, not rigidly applicable to all its individuals, neither is it sharp and definite in all stages of the moral or spiritual history of the race or in all phases of the individual evolution. The tamasic man who makes so large a part of the whole, falls into neither category as it is here described, though he may have both elements in him in a low degree and for the most part serves tepidly the lower qualities. The normal man is ordinarily a mixture; but one or the other tendency is more pronounced, tends to make him predominantly rajaso-tamasic or sattwo-rajasic and can be said to be preparing him for either culmination, for the divine clarity or the titanic turbulence. For here what is in question is a certain culmination in the evolution of the qualitative nature, as will be evident from the descriptions given in the text. On one side there can be a sublimation of the sattwic quality, the culmination or manifestation of the unborn Deva, on the other a sublimation of the rajasic turn of the soul in nature, the entire birth of the Asura. The one leads towards that movement of liberation on which the Gita is about to lay stress; it makes possible a high self-



## DEVA AND ASURA

exceeding of the sattwa quality and a transformation into the likeness of the divine being, *vimokṣhâya*. The other leads away from that universal potentiality and precipitates towards an exaggeration of our bondage to the ego. This is the point of the distinction.

The Deva nature is distinguished by an acme of the sattwic habits and qualities ; self-control, sacrifice, the religious habit, cleanness and purity, candour and straightforwardness, truth, calm, self-denial, compassion to all beings, modesty, gentleness, forgivingness, patience, steadfastness, a deep sweet and serious freedom from all restlessness, levity and inconstancy are its native attributes. The Asuric qualities, wrath, greed, cunning, treachery, wilful doing of injury to others, pride and arrogance and excessive self-esteem have no place in its composition. But its gentleness and self-denial and self-control are free too from all weakness : it has energy and soul force, strong resolution, the fearlessness of the soul that lives in the right and according to the truth as well as its harmlessness, *tejah*, *abhayam*, *dhritih*, *ahinsâ*, *satyam*. The whole being, the whole temperament is integrally pure ; there is a seeking for knowledge and a calm and fixed abiding in knowledge. This is the wealth, the plenitude of the man born into the Deva nature.

The Asuric nature has too its wealth, its plenitude of force, but it is of a very different, a powerful and evil kind. Asuric men have no true

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

knowledge of the way of action or the way of abstention, the fulfilling or the holding in of the nature. Truth is not in them, nor clean doing, nor faithful observance. They see naturally in the world nothing but a huge play of the satisfaction of self; theirs is a world with Desire for its cause and seed and governing force and law, a world of Chance, a world devoid of just relation and linked Karma, a world without God, not true, not founded in Truth. Whatever better intellectual or higher religious dogma they may possess, this alone is the true creed of their mind and will in action; they follow always the cult of Desire and Ego. On that way of seeing life they lean in reality and by its falsehood they ruin their souls and their reason. The Asuric man becomes the centre or instrument of a fierce, Titanic, violent action, a power of destruction in the world, a fount of injury and evil. Arrogant, full of self-esteem and the drunkenness of their pride, these misguided souls delude themselves, persist in false and obstinate aims and pursue the fixed impure resolution of their longings. They imagine that desire and enjoyment are all the aim of life and in their inordinate and insatiable pursuit of it they are the prey of a devouring, a measurelessly unceasing care and thought and endeavour and anxiety till the moment of their death. Bound by a hundred bonds, devoured by wrath and lust, unweariedly occupied in amassing unjust gains which may serve their enjoyment and the satisfaction

of their craving, always they think, "To-day I have gained this object of desire, tomorrow I shall have that other; to-day I have so much wealth, more I will get tomorrow. I have killed this my enemy, the rest too I will kill. I am a lord and king of men, I am perfect, accomplished, strong, happy, fortunate, a privileged enjoyer of the world; I am wealthy, I am of high birth; who is there like unto me? I will sacrifice, I will give, I will enjoy." Thus occupied by many egoistic ideas, deluded, doing works, but doing them wrongly, acting mightily, but for themselves, for desire, for enjoyment, not for God in themselves and God in man, they fall into the unclean hell of their own evil. They sacrifice and give, but from a self-regarding ostentation, from vanity and with a stiff and foolish pride. In the egoism of their strength and power, in the violence of their wrath and arrogance they hate, despise and belittle the God hidden in themselves and the God in man. And because they have this proud hatred and contempt of good and of God, because they are cruel and evil, the Divine casts ~~them~~ down continually into more and more Asuric births. Not seeking him, they find him not, and at last, losing the way to him altogether, sink down into the lowest status of soul-nature, *adhamâmgatim*.

This graphic description, even giving its entire value to the distinction it implies, must not be pressed to carry more in it than it means. When it

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

is said that there are two creations of beings in this material world, Deva and Asura,\* it is not meant that human souls are so created by God from the beginning each with its own inevitable career in Nature, nor is it meant that there is a rigid spiritual predestination and those rejected from the beginning by the Divine are blinded by him so that they may be thrust down to eternal perdition and the impurity of Hell. All souls are eternal portions of the Divine, the Asura as well as the Deva, all can come to salvation : even the greatest sinner can turn to the Divine. But the evolution of the soul in Nature is an adventure of which Swabhava and the Karma governed by the swabhava are ever the chief powers ; and if an excess in the manifestation of the swabhava, the self-becoming of the soul, a disorder in its play turns the law of being to the perverse side, if the rajasic qualities are given the upper hand, cultured to the diminution of sattwa, then the trend of Karma and its results necessarily culminate not in the sattwic height which is capable of the movement of liberation, but in the highest exaggeration of the perversities of the lower nature. The man, if he does not stop short and abandon his way or <sup>error</sup>,  
error,

\* The distinction between the two creations has its full truth in supraphysical planes where the law of spiritual evolution does not govern the movement. There are worlds of the Devas, worlds of the Asuras, and there are in these worlds behind us constant types of beings which support the complete divine play of creation indispensable to the march of the universe and cast their influence also on the earth and on the life and nature of man in this physical plane of existence.

is eventually born as an Asura, and once he has taken that enormous turn away from the Light and Truth, he can no more reverse the fatal speed of his course because of the very immensity of the misused divine power in him until he has plumbed the depths to which it falls, found bottom and seen where the way has led him, the power exhausted and misspent, himself down in the lowest state of the soul nature, which is Hell. Only when he understands and turns to the Light, does that other truth of the Gita come in, that even the greatest sinner, the most impure and violent evildoer is saved the moment he turns to adore and follow after the Godhead within him. Then, simply by that turn, he gets very soon into the sattwic way which leads to perfection and freedom.

The Asuric Prakriti is the rajasic at its height; it leads to the slavery of the soul in Nature, to desire, wrath and greed, the three powers of the rajasic ego, and these are the threefold doors of Hell, the Hell into which the natural being falls when it indulges the impurity and evil and error of its lower or ~~perverted~~ instincts. These three are again the doors of a great darkness, they fold back into tamas, the characteristic power of the original Ignorance; for the unbridled force of the rajasic nature, when exhausted, falls back into the weakness, collapse, darkness, incapacity of the worst tamasic soul-status. To escape from this downfall one must get rid of these three evil forces and turn to the light of the

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

sattwic quality, live by the right, in the true relations, according to the Truth and the Law; then one follows one's own higher good and arrives at the highest soul-status. To follow the law of desire is not the true rule of our nature; there is a higher and juster standard of its works. But where is it embodied or how is it to be found? In the first place, the human race has always been seeking for this just and high Law and whatever it has discovered is embodied in its Shastra, its rule of science and knowledge, rule of ethics, rule of religion, rule of best social living, rule of one's right relations with man and God and Nature. Shastra does not mean a mass of customs, some good, some bad, unintelligently followed by the customary routine mind of the tamasic man. Shastra is the knowledge and teaching laid down by intuition, experience and wisdom, the science and art and ethic of life, the best standards available to the race. The half-awakened man who leaves the observance of its rule to follow the guidance of his instincts and desires, can get pleasure but not happiness, for the inner happiness can only come by right living. He cannot move to perfection, cannot acquire the highest spiritual status. The law of instinct and desire seems to come first in the animal world, but the manhood of man grows by the pursuit of truth and religion and knowledge and a right life. The Shastra, the recognised Right that he has set up to govern his lower members by his reason and intelli-

gent will, must therefore first be observed and made the authority for conduct and works and for what should or should not be done, till the instinctive desire nature is schooled and abated and put down by the habit of self-control and man is ready first for a freer intelligent self-guidance and then for the highest supreme law and supreme liberty of the spiritual nature.

For the Shastra in its ordinary aspect is not that spiritual law, although at its loftiest point, when it becomes a science and art of spiritual living, Adhyatma-shastra,—the Gita itself describes its own teaching as the highest and most secret Shastra,—it formulates a rule of the self-transcendence of the sattwic nature and develops the discipline which leads to spiritual transmutation. Yet all Shastra is built on a number of preparatory conditions, dharmas; it is a means, not an end. The supreme end is the freedom of the spirit when abandoning all dharmas the soul turns to God for its sole law of action, acts straight from the divine will and lives in the freedom of the divine nature, not in the Law, but in the Spirit. This is the development of the teaching which is prepared by the next question of Arjuna.

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## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS\*

The Gita has made a distinction between action according to the license of personal desire and action done according to the Shastra. We must understand by the latter the recognised science and art of life which is the outcome of mankind's collective living, its culture, religion, science, its progressive discovery of the best rule of life,—but mankind still walking in the ignorance and proceeding in a half light towards knowledge. The action of personal desire belongs to the unregenerated state of our nature and is dictated by ignorance or false knowledge and an unregulated or ill-regulated kinetic or rajasic egoism. The action controlled by Shastra is an outcome of intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, social and religious culture; it embodies an attempt at a certain right living, harmony and right order and is evidently an effort, more or less advanced according to circumstances, of the sattwic element in man to overtop, regulate and ~~control~~ or guide, where it must be admitted, his rajasic and tamasic egoism. It is the means to a step in advance, and therefore mankind must first proceed through it and make this Shastra its law of action rather than obey the impulsion of its personal

\* Gita XVII.



## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

desires. This is a general rule which humanity has always recognised wherever it has arrived at any kind of established and developed society ; it has an idea of an order, a law, a standard of its perfection, something other than the guidance of its desires or the crude direction of its raw impulses. This greater rule the individual finds usually outside himself in some more or less fixed outcome of the experience and wisdom of the race, which he accepts, to which his mind and the leading parts of his being give their assent or sanction and which he tries to make his own by living it in his mind, will and action. And this assent of the being, its conscious acceptance and will to believe and realise, may be called by the name which the Gita gives to it, his faith, *çraddhâ*. The religion, the philosophy, the ethical law, the social idea, the cultural idea in which I put my faith, gives me a law for my nature and its works, an idea of relative right or an idea of relative or absolute perfection and in proportion as I have a sincerity and completeness of faith in it and an intensity of will to live according to that faith, ~~I can become~~ what it proposes to me, I can shape myself into an image of that right or an exemplar of that perfection.

But we see also that there is a freer tendency in man other than the leading of his desires and other than his will to accept the Law, the fixed idea, the safe governing rule of the Shastra. The individual frequently enough, the community at any moment of

its life is seen to turn away from the Shastra, becomes impatient of it, loses that form of its will and faith and goes in search of another law which it is now more disposed to accept as the right rule of living and regard as a more vital or higher truth of existence. This may happen when the established Shastra ceases to be a living thing and degenerates or stiffens into a mass of customs and conventions. Or it may come because it is found that the Shastra is imperfect or no longer useful for the progress demanded; a new truth, a more perfect law of living has become imperative. If that does not exist, it has to be discovered by the effort of the race or by some great and illumined individual mind who embodies the desire and seeking of the race. The Vedic law becomes a convention and a Buddha appears with his new rule of the eightfold path and the goal of Nirvana; and it may be remarked that he propounds it not as a personal invention, but as the true rule of Aryan living constantly rediscovered by the Buddha, the enlightened mind, the awakened spirit. But this practically means that there is an ideal, an eternal Dharma which religion, philosophy, ethics and all other powers in man that strive after truth and perfection are constantly endeavouring to embody in new statements of the science and art of the inner and outer life, a new Shastra. The Mosaic law of religious, ethical and social righteousness is convicted of narrowness and imperfection and is now besides a convention; the law of Christ comes to

## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

replace it and claims at once to abrogate and to fulfil, to abrogate the imperfect form and fulfil in a deeper and broader light and power the spirit of the thing which it aimed at, the divine rule of living. And the human search does not stop there, but leaves these formulations too, goes back to some past truth it had rejected or breaks forward to some new truth and power, but is always in search of the same thing, the law of its perfection, its rule of right living, its complete, highest and essential self and nature.

This movement begins with the individual, who is no longer satisfied with the law because he finds that it no longer corresponds to his idea and largest or intensest experience of himself and existence and therefore he can no longer bring to it the will to believe and practise. It does not correspond to his inner way of being, it is not to him *sat*, the thing that truly is, the right, the highest or best or real good; it is not the truth and law of his or of all being. The Shashtra is something impersonal to the individual, and that gives it its authority over the narrow personal law of his members; but at the same time it is personal to the collectivity and is the outcome of its experience, its culture or its nature. It is not in all its form and spirit the ideal rule of fulfilment of the Self or the eternal law of the Master of our nature, although it may contain in itself in small or larger measure indications, preparations, illuminating glimpses of that far greater thing. And the individual may have gone beyond the collectivity and be

ready for a greater truth, a wider walk, a deeper intention of the Life-Spirit. The leading in him that departs from the Shastra may not indeed be always a higher movement ; it may take the form of a revolt of the egoistic or rajasic nature seeking freedom from the yoke of something which it feels to be cramping to its liberty of self-fulfilment and self-finding. But even then it is often justified by some narrowness or imperfection of the Shastra or by the degradation of the current rule of living into a merely restricting or lifeless convention. And so far it is legitimate, it appeals to a truth, it has a good and just reason for existence : for though it misses the right path, yet the free action of the rajasic ego, because it has more in it of liberty and life, is better than the dead and hidebound tamasic following of a convention. The rajasic is always stronger, always more forcefully inspired and has more possibilities in it than the tamasic nature. But also this leading may be sattwic at its heart ; it may be a turn to a larger and greater ideal which will carry us nearer to a more complete and ample truth of our self and universal existence than has yet been seen and nearer therefore to that highest law which is one with the divine ~~freedom~~. And in effect this movement is usually an attempt to lay hold on some forgotten truth or to move on to a yet undiscovered or un-lived truth of our being. It is not a mere licentious movement of the unregulated nature ; it has its spiritual justification and is a necessity of our spiritual progress. And even

## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

if the Shastra is still a living thing and the best rule for the human average, the exceptional man, spiritual, inwardly developed, is not bound by that standard. He is called upon to go beyond the fixed line of the Shastra. For this is a rule for the guidance, control and relative perfection of the normal imperfect man and he has to go on to a more absolute perfection : this is a system of fixed dharmas and he has to learn to live in the liberty of the Spirit.

But what then shall be the secure base of an action which departs both from the guidance of desire and from the normal law? For the rule of desire has an authority of its own, no longer safe or satisfactory to us as it is to the animal or as it might have been to a primitive humanity, but still, so far as it goes, founded on a very living part of our nature and fortified by its strong indications; and the law, the Shastra has behind it all the authority of long established rule, old successful sanctions and a secure past experience. But this new movement is of the nature of a powerful adventure into the unknown or partly known, a daring development and a new conquest, and what then is the clue to be followed, the guiding light on which it can depend or its strong basis in our being? The answer is that the clue and support is to be found in man's *çraddhâ*, his faith, his will to believe, to live what he sees or thinks to be the truth of himself and of existence. In other words this movement is man's

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

appeal to himself or to something potent and compelling in himself or in universal existence for the discovery of his truth, his law of living, his way to fullness and perfection. And everything depends on the nature of his faith, the thing in himself or in the universal soul—of which he is a portion or manifestation—to which he directs it and on how near he gets by it to his real self and the Self or true being of the universe. If he is tamasic, obscure, clouded, if he has an ignorant faith, an inapt will, he will reach nothing true and will fall away to his lower nature. If he is lured by false rajasic lights, he can be carried away by self-will into bypaths that may lead to morass or precipice. In either case his only chance of salvation lies in a return of sattwa upon him to impose a new enlightened order and rule upon his members which will liberate him from the violent error of his self-will or the dull error of his clouded ignorance. If on the other hand he has the sattwic nature and a sattwic faith and direction for his steps, he will arrive in sight of a higher yet unachieved ideal rule which may lead him even in rare instances beyond the sattwic light some way at least towards a highest divine illumination and divine way of being and living. For if the sattwic light is so strong in him as to bring him to its own culminating point, then he will be able advancing from that point to make out his gate of entrance into some first ray of that which is divine, transcendent and absolute. In all effort at self-finding

these possibilities are there; they are the conditions of this spiritual adventure.

Now we have to see how the Gita deals with this question on its own line of spiritual teaching and self-discipline. For Arjuna puts immediately a suggestive query from which the problem or one aspect of it arises. When men, he says, sacrifice to God or the gods with faith, *çraddhâ*, but abandon the rule of the Shastra, what is that concentrated will of devotion in them, *nishthâ*, which gives them this faith and moves them to this kind of action? Is it *sattwa*, *rajas* or *tamas*? to which strand of our nature does it belong? The answer of the Gita first states the principle that the faith in us is of a triple kind like all things in Nature and varies according to the dominating quality of our nature. The faith of each man takes the shape, hue, quality given to it by his stuff of being, his constituting temperament, his innate power of existence, *sattwânurûpâ sarvasya çraddhâ*. And then there comes a remarkable line in which the Gita tells us that this Purusha, this soul in man, is, as it were, made of *çraddha*, a faith, a will to be, a belief in itself and existence, and whatever is that will, faith or constituting belief in him, he is that and that is he. *çraddhâmayo 'yam purusho yo yach-chhraddhah sa eva sah*. If we look into this pregnant saying a little closely, we shall find that this single line contains implied in its few forceful words almost the whole theory of the modern gospel of pragmatism.

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

For if a man or the soul in a man consists of the faith which is in him, taken in this deeper sense, then it follows that the truth which he sees and wills to live is for him the truth of his being, the truth of himself that he has created or is creating and there can be for him no other real truth. This truth is a thing of his inner and outer action, a thing of his becoming, of the soul's dynamics, not of that in him which never changes. He is what he is to-day by some past will of his nature sustained and continued by a present will to know, to believe and to be in his intelligence and vital force, and whatever new turn is taken by this will and faith active in his very substance, that he will tend to become in the future. We create our own truth of existence in our own action of mind and life, which is another way of saying that we create our own selves, are our own makers.

But very obviously this is only one aspect of the truth, and all one-aspected statements are suspect to the thinker. Truth is not merely whatever our own personality is or creates; that is only the truth of our becoming, one point or line of emphasis in a movement of widest volume. Beyond our personality there is, first, a universal being as well as a universal becoming of which ours is a little movement; and beyond that too there is the eternal Being out of which all becoming derives and to which it owes its potentialities, elements, original and final motives. We may say indeed that all becoming is



only an act of universal consciousness, is Maya, is a creation of the will to become, and the only other reality, if there is any, is a pure eternal existence beyond consciousness, featureless, unexpressed and inexpressible. That is practically the standpoint taken by the Mayavadin's Adwaita and the sense of the distinction he makes between pragmatic truth which to his mind is illusory or at least only temporarily and partly real while modern pragmatism takes it to be the true truth or at least the only recognisable reality because the only reality that we can act and know,—between that pragmatic illusion and on the other side of creative Maya the lonely Absolute featureless and inexpressible. But for the Gita absolute Brahman is also supreme Purusha, and Purusha is always conscious Soul, though its highest consciousness, its superconsciousness, if we will,—as, one may add, its lowest which we call the Inconscient,—is something very different from our mind consciousness to which alone we are accustomed to give the name. There is in that highest superconscience a highest truth and dharma of immortality, a greatest divine way of being, a way of the eternal and infinite. That eternal way of existence and divine manner of being exists already in the eternity of the Purushottama, but we are now attempting to create it here too in our becoming by Yoga; our endeavour is to become the Divine, to be as He, *madbbâva*. That also depends on *çrad dhâ*. It is by an act of our conscious substance and a belief

in its truth, an inmost will to live it or be it that we come by it; but this does not mean that it does not already exist beyond us. Though it may not exist for our outward mind until we see and create ourselves anew into it, it is still there in the Eternal and we may say even that it is already there in our own secret self; for in us also, in our depths the Purushottama always is. Our growing into that, our creation of it is his and its manifestation in us. All creation indeed since it proceeds from the conscious substance of the Eternal, is a manifestation of him and proceeds by a faith, acceptance, will to be in the originating consciousness, Chit-Shakti.

We are concerned at present, however, not with the metaphysical issue, but with the relation of this will or faith in our being to our possibility of growth into the perfection of the divine nature. This power, this *çraddhâ* is in any case our basis. When we live, when we are and do according to our desires, that is a persistent act of *çraddhâ* belonging mostly to our vital and physical, our tamasic and rajasic nature. And when we try to be, to live and to do according to the Shashtra, we proceed by a persistent act of *çraddhâ* which belongs, supposing it to be not a routine faith, to a sattwic tendency that is constantly labouring to impose itself on our rajasic and tamasic parts. When we leave both these things and try to be, to live and to do according to some ideal or novel conception of truth of our own finding or our own individual acceptance, that too is a persistent act of

## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

*çraddhâ* which may be dominated by any one of these three qualities that constantly govern our every thought, will, feeling and act. And again when we try to be, to live and to do according to the divine nature, then too we must proceed by a persistent act of *çraddhâ*, which must be according to the Gita the faith of the sattwic nature when it culminates and is preparing to exceed its own clear-cut limits. But all and any of these things implies some kinesis or displacement of nature, all suppose an inner or outer or ordinarily both an inner and an outer action. And what then will be the character of this action? The Gita states three main elements of the work we have to do, *kartavyam karma*, and these three are sacrifice, giving and askesis. For when questioned by Arjuna on the difference between the outer and inner renunciation, *sannyâsa* and *tyâga*, Krishna insists that these three things ought not to be renounced at all but ought altogether to be done, for they are the work before us, *kartavyam karma*, and they purify the wise. In other words these acts constitute the means of our perfection. But at the same time they may be done unwisely or less wisely by the unwise. All dynamic action may be reduced in its essential parts to these three elements. For all dynamic action, all kinesis of the nature involves a voluntary or an involuntary tapasya or askesis, an energism and concentration of our forces or capacities or of some capacity which helps us to achieve, to acquire or to become something, *tapas*. All action

involves a giving of what we are or have, an expenditure which is the price of that achievement, acquisition or becoming, *dâna*. All action involves too a sacrifice to elemental or to universal powers or to the supreme Master of our works. The question is whether we do these things unconsciously, passively, or at best with an unintelligent ignorant half-conscious will, or with an unwisely or perversely conscient energism, or with a wisely conscient will rooted in knowledge, in other words, whether our sacrifice, giving and askesis are tamasic, rajasic or sattwic in nature.

For everything here, including physical things, partakes of this triple character. Our food, for example, the Gita tells us, is either sattwic, rajasic or tamasic according to its character and effect on the body. The sattwic temperament in the mental and physical body turns naturally to the things that increase the life, increase the inner and outer strength, nourish at once the mental, vital and physical force and increase the pleasure and satisfaction and happy condition of mind and life and body, all that is succulent and soft and firm and satisfying. The rajasic temperament prefers naturally food that is violently sour, pungent, hot, acrid, rough and strong and burning, the aliments that increase ill-health and the distempers of the mind and body. The tamasic temperament takes a perverse pleasure in cold, impure, stale, rotten or tasteless food or even accepts like the animals the remnants half-

## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

eaten by others. All-pervading is the principle of the three gunas. The gunas apply at the other end in the same way to the things of the mind and spirit, to sacrifice, giving and askesis, and the Gita distinguishes under each of these three heads between the three kinds in the customary terms of these things as they were formulated by the symbolism of the old Indian culture. But, remembering the very wide sense which the Gita itself gives to the idea of sacrifice, we may well enlarge the surface meaning of these hints and open them to a freer significance. And it will be convenient to take them in the reverse order, from *tamas* to *sattwa*, since we are considering how we go upward out of our lower nature through a certain *sattwic* culmination and self-exceeding to a divine nature and action beyond the three gunas.

The tamasic sacrifice is work which is done without faith, without, that is to say, any full conscious idea and acceptance and will towards the thing Nature yet compels us to execute. It is done mechanically, because the act of living demands it, because it comes in our way, because others do it, to avoid some other greater difficulty which may arise from not doing it, or from any other tamasic motive. And it is apt to be done, if we have in the full this kind of temperament, carelessly, perfunctorily, in the wrong way. It will not be performed by the *vidhi* or right rule of the *Shashtra*, will not be led in its steps according to the right method laid down by the art and science of life and the true

science of the thing to be done. There will be no giving of food in the sacrifice,—and that act in the Indian ritual is symbolic of the element of helpful giving inherent in every action that is real sacrifice, the indispensable giving to others, the fruitful help to others, to the world, without which our action becomes a wholly self-regarding thing and a violation of the true universal law of solidarity and interchange. The work will be done without the dakshina, the much-needed giving or self-giving to the leaders of the sacrificial action, whether to the outward guide and helper of our work or to the veiled or manifest godhead within us. It will be done without the mantra, without the dedicating thought which is the sacred body of our will and knowledge lifted upwards to the godheads we serve by our sacrifice. The tamasic man does not offer his sacrifice to the gods, but to inferior elemental powers or to those grosser spirits behind the veil who feed upon his works and dominate his life with their darkness.

The rajasic man offers his sacrifice to lower godheads or to perverse powers, the Yakshas, the keepers of wealth, or to the Asuric and the Rakshasic forces. His sacrifice may be performed outwardly according to the Shastra, but its motive is ostentation, pride or a strong lust after the fruit of his action, a vehement demand for the reward of his works. All work therefore that proceeds from violent or egoistic personal desire or from an arrogant will intent to

impose itself on the world for personal objects is of the rajasic nature, even if it mask itself with the insignia of the light, even if it be done outwardly as a sacrifice. Although it is ostensibly given to God or to the gods, it remains essentially an Asuric action. It is the inner state, motive and direction which give their value to our works, and not merely the apparent outer direction, the divine names we may call to sanction them or even the sincere intellectual belief which seems to justify us in the performance. Wherever there is a dominating egoism in our acts, there our work becomes a rajasic sacrifice. The true sattwic sacrifice on the other hand is distinguished by three signs that are the quiet seal of its character. First, it is dictated by the effective truth, executed according to the *vidhi*, the right principle, the exact method and rule, the just rhythm and law of our works, their true functioning, their dharma; that means that the reason and enlightened will are the guides and determinants of their steps and their purpose. Secondly, it is executed with a mind concentrated and fixed on the idea of the thing to be done as a true sacrifice imposed on us by the divine law that governs our life and therefore performed out of a high inner obligation or imperative truth and without desire for the personal fruit,—the more impersonal the motive of the action and the temperament of the force put out in it, the more sattwic is its nature. And finally it is offered to the gods without any reservation; it is acceptable to the

divine powers by whom—for they are his masks and personalities—the Master of existence governs the universe.

This sattwic sacrifice comes then very near to the ideal and leads directly towards the kind of action demanded by the Gita; but it is not the last and highest ideal, it is not yet the action of the perfected man who lives in the divine nature. For it is carried out as a fixed dharma, and it is offered as a sacrifice or service to the gods, to some partial power or aspect of the Divine manifested in ourselves or in the universe. Work done with a disinterested religious faith or selflessly for humanity or impersonally from devotion to the Right or the Truth is of this nature, and action of that kind is necessary for our perfection; for it purifies our thought and will and our natural substance. The culmination of the sattwic action at which we have to arrive is of a still larger and freer kind; it is the high last sacrifice offered by us to the supreme Divine in his integral being and with a seeking for the Purushottama or with the vision of Vasudeva in all that is, the action done impersonally, universally, for the good of the world, for the fulfilment of the divine will in the universe. That culmination leads to its own transcending, to the immortal Dharma. For then comes a freedom in which there is no personal action at all, no sattwic rule of dharma, no limitation of Shastra; the inferior reason and will are themselves overpassed and it is not they but a higher



## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

wisdom that dictates and guides the work and commands its objective. There is no question of personal fruit; for the will that works is not our own but a supreme Will of which the soul is the instrument. There is no self-regarding and no selflessness; for the Jiva, the eternal portion of the Divine, is united with the highest Self of his existence and he and all are one in that Self and Spirit. There is no personal action, for all actions are given up to the Master of our works and it is he that does the action through the divinised Prakriti. There is no sacrifice, —unless we can say that the Master of sacrifice is offering the works of his energy in the Jiva to himself in his own cosmic form. This is the supreme self-surpassing state arrived at by the action that is sacrifice, this the perfection of the soul that has come to its full consciousness in the divine nature.

Tamasic tapasya is that which is pursued under a clouded and deluded idea hard and obstinate in its delusion, maintained by an ignorant faith in some cherished falsehood, performed with effort and suffering imposed on oneself in pursuit of some narrow and vulgar egoistic object empty of relation to any true or great aim or else with a concentration of the energy in a will to do hurt to others. That which makes this kind of energism tamasic is not any principle of inertia, for inertia is foreign to tapasya, but a darkness in the mind and nature, a vulgar narrowness and ugliness in the doing or a brutish instinct or desire in the aim or in the motive

feeling. Rajasic energisms of askesis are those which are undertaken to get honour and worship from men, for the sake of personal distinction and outward glory and greatness or from some other of the many motives of egoistic will and pride. This kind of askesis is devoted to fleeting particular objects which add nothing to the heavenward growth and perfection of the soul ; it is a thing without fixed and helpful principle, an energy bound up with change-ful and passing occasion and itself of that nature. Or even if there is ostensibly a more inward and noble object and the faith and will are of a higher kind, yet if any kind of arrogance or pride or any great strength of violent self-will or desire enters into the askesis or if it drives some violent, lawless or terrible action contrary to the Shastra, opposed to the right rule of life and works and afflicting to one self and to others, or if it is of the nature of self-torture and hurts the mental, vital and physical elements or violates the God within us who is seated in the inner subtle body, then too it is an unwise, an Asuric, a rajasic or rajaso-tamasic tapasya.

Sattwic tapasya is that which is done with a highest enlightened faith, as a duty deeply accepted or for some ethical or spiritual or other higher reason and with no desire for any external or narrowly personal fruit in the action. It is of the character of self-discipline and asks for self-control and a harmonising of one's nature. The Gita describes three kinds of sattwic askesis. First comes the

## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

physical, the askesis of the outward act; under this head are especially mentioned worship and reverence of those deserving reverence, cleanness of the person, the action and the life, candid dealing, sexual purity and avoidance of killing and injury to others. Next is askesis of speech, and that consists in the study of Scripture, kind, true and beneficent speech and a careful avoidance of words that may cause fear, sorrow and trouble to others. Finally there is the askesis of mental and moral perfection, and that means the purifying of the whole temperament, gentleness and a clear and calm gladness of mind, self-control and silence. Here comes in all that quiets or disciplines the rajasic and egoistic nature and all that replaces it by the happy and tranquil principle of good and virtue. This is the askesis of the sattwic dharma so highly prized in the system of the ancient Indian culture. Its greater culmination will be a high purity of the reason and will, an equal soul, a deep peace and calm, a wide sympathy and preparation of oneness, a reflection of the inner soul's divine gladness in the mind, life and body. There at that lofty point the ethical is already passing away into the spiritual type and character. And this culmination too can be made to transcend itself, can be raised into a higher and freer light, can pass away into the settled godlike energy of the supreme nature. And what will remain then will be the spirit's immaculate Tapas, a highest will and luminous force in all the members

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

acting in a wide and solid calm and a deep and pure spiritual delight, Ananda. There will then be no farther need of askesis, no tapasya, because all is naturally and easily divine, all is that Tapas. There will be no separate labour of the lower energism, because the energy of Prakriti will have found its true source and base in the transcendent will of the Purushottama. Then, because of this high initiation, the acts of this energy on the lower planes also will proceed naturally and spontaneously from an innate perfect will and by an inherent perfect guidance. There will be no limitation by any of the present dharmas; for there will be a free action far above the rajasic and tamasic nature, but also far beyond the too careful and narrow limits of the sattwic rule of action.

As with tapasya, all giving also is of an ignorant tamasic, an ostentatious rajasic or a disinterested and enlightened sattwic character. The tamasic gift is offered ignorantly with no consideration of the right conditions of time, place and object; it is a foolish, inconsiderate and in reality a self-regarding movement, an ungenerous and ignoble generosity, the gift offered without sympathy or true liberality, without regard for the feelings of the recipient and despised by him even in the acceptance. The rajasic kind of giving is that which is done with regret, unwillingness or violence to oneself or with a personal and egoistic object or in the hope of a return of some kind from whatever quarter or a correspond-

## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

ing or greater benefit to oneself from the receiver. The sattwic way of giving is to bestow with right reason and good will and sympathy in the right conditions of time and place and on the right recipient who is worthy or to whom the gift can be really helpful. Its act is performed for the sake of the giving and the beneficence, without any view to a benefit already done or yet to be done to oneself by the receiver of the benefit and without any personal object in the action. The culmination of the sattwic way of *dâna* will bring into the action an increasing element of that wide self-giving to others and to the world and to God, *âtma-dâna*, *âtma-samarpana*, which is the high consecration of the sacrifice of works enjoined by the Gita. And the transcendence in the divine nature will be a greatest completeness of self-offering founded on the largest meaning of existence. All this manifold universe comes into birth and is constantly maintained by God's giving of himself and his powers and the lavish outflow of his self and spirit into all these existences; universal being, says the Veda, is the sacrifice of the Purusha. All the action of the perfected soul will be even such a constant divine giving of itself and its powers, an outflowing of the knowledge, light, strength, love, joy, helpful shakti which it possesses in the Divine and by his influence and effluence on all around it according to their capacity of reception or on all this world and its creatures.

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

That will be the complete result of the complete self-giving of the soul to the Master of our existence.

The Gita closes this chapter with what seems at first sight a recondite utterance. The formula OM, Tat, Sat, is, it says, the triple definition of the Brahman, by whom the Brahmanas, the Vedas and sacrifices were created of old and in it resides all their significance. Tat, That, indicates the Absolute. Sat indicates the supreme and universal existence in its principle. OM is the symbol of the triple Brahman, the outward-looking, the inward or subtle and the superconscient causal Purusha. Each letter A, U, M indicates one of these three in ascending order and the syllable as a whole brings out the fourth state, Turiya, which rises to the Absolute. OM is the initiating syllable pronounced at the outset as a benedictory prelude and sanction to all act of sacrifice, all act of giving and all act of askesis; it is a reminder that our work should be made an expression of the triple Divine in our inner being and turned towards him in the idea and motive. The seekers of liberation do these actions without desire of fruit and only with the idea, feeling, Ananda of the absolute Divine behind their nature. It is that which they seek by this purity and impersonality in their works, this high desirelessness, this vast emptiness of ego and plenitude of Spirit. Sat means good and it means existence. Both these things, the principle of good and the principle of reality must be there behind all the three kinds of

## THE GUNAS, FAITH AND WORKS

action. All good works are Sat, for they prepare the soul for the higher reality of our being; all firm abiding in sacrifice, giving and askesis and all works done with that central view, as sacrifice, as giving, as askesis, are Sat, for they build the basis for the highest truth of our spirit. And because *çraddhâ* is the central principle of our existence, any of these things done without *çraddhâ* is a falsity and has no true meaning or true substance on earth or beyond, no reality, no power to endure or create in life here or after the mortal life in greater regions of our conscious spirit. The soul's faith, not a mere intellectual belief, but its concordant will to know, to see, to believe and to do and be according to its vision and knowledge, is that which determines by its power the measure of our possibilities of becoming, and it is this faith and will turned in all our inner and outer self, nature and action towards all that is highest, most divine, most real and eternal that will enable us to reach the supreme perfection.

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## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS\*

The Gita has not yet completed its analysis of action in the light of this fundamental idea of the three gunas and the transcendence of them by a self-exceeding culmination of the highest sattwic discipline. Faith, *śraddhâ*, the will to believe and to be, know, live and enact the Truth that we have seen is the principal factor, the indispensable force behind a self-developing action, most of all behind the growth of the soul by works into its full spiritual stature. But there are also the mental powers, the instruments and the conditions which help to constitute the momentum, direction and character of the activity and are therefore of importance for a full understanding of this psychological discipline. The Gita enters into a summary psychological analysis of these things before it proceeds to its great finale, the culmination of all it teaches, the highest secret which is that of a spiritual exceeding of all dharmas, a divine transcendence. And we have to follow it in its brief descriptions, summarily, expanding just enough to seize fully the main idea; for these are secondary things, but yet each of great consequence in its own place and for its own purpose. It is their action cast in the type of the gunas that we have to

\* Gita XVIII 1—39.



## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS

bring out from the brief descriptions in the text; the nature of the culmination of any or each of them beyond the gunas will automatically follow from the character of the general transcendence.

This part of the subject is introduced by a last question of Arjuna regarding the principle of Sannyasa and the principle of Tyaga and their difference. The frequent harping, the reiterated emphasis of the Gita on this crucial distinction has been amply justified by the subsequent history of the later Indian mind, its constant confusion of these two very different things and its strong bent towards belittling any activity of the kind taught by the Gita as at best only a preliminary to the supreme inaction of Sannyasa. As a matter of fact, when people talk of Tyaga, of renunciation, it is always the physical renunciation of the world which they understand by the word or at least on which they lay emphasis, while the Gita takes absolutely the opposite view that the real Tyaga has action and living in the world as its basis and not a flight to the monastery, the cave or the hill top. The real Tyaga is action with a renunciation of desire and that too is the real Sannyasa. •

The liberating activity of the sattwic self-discipline must no doubt be pervaded by a spirit of renunciation,—that is an essential element: but what renunciation and in what manner of the spirit? Not the renunciation of work in the world, not any outward asceticism or any ostentation of a visible

giving up of enjoyment, but a renunciation, a leaving, *tyaga*, of vital desire and ego, a total laying aside, *sannyâsa*, of the separate personal life of the desire soul and ego-governed mind and rajasic vital nature. That is the true condition for entering into the heights of Yoga whether through the impersonal self and Brahmic oneness or through universal Vasudeva or inwardly into the supreme Purushottama. More conventionally taken, Sannyasa in the standing terminology of the sages means the physical depositing or laying aside of desirable actions: Tyaga—this is the Gita's distinction—is the name given by the wise to a mental and spiritual renunciation, an entire abandonment of all attached clinging to the fruit of our works, to the action itself or to its personal initiation or rajasic impulse. In that sense Tyaga, not Sannyasa is the better way. It is not the desirable actions that must be laid aside, but the desire which gives them that character has to be put away from us. The fruit of the action may come in the dispensation of the Master of works, but there is to be no egoistic demand for that as a reward and condition of doing works. Or the fruit may not at all come and still the work has to be performed as the thing to be done, *kartavyam karma*, the thing which the Master within demands of us. The success or the failure are in his hands and he will regulate them according to his omniscient will and inscrutable purpose. Action, all action has indeed to be given up in the end, not

physically by abstention, by immobility, by inertia, but spiritually to the Master of our being by whose power alone can any action be accomplished. There has to be a renunciation of the false idea of ourselves as the doer ; for in reality it is the universal Shakti that works through our personality and our ego. The spiritual transference of all our works to the Master and his Shakti is the real Sannyasa in the teaching of the Gita.

The question still arises what works are to be done? Those even who stand for a final physical renunciation are not at one in this difficult matter. Some would have it that all works must be excised from our life, as if that were possible. But it is not possible so long as we are in the body and alive ; nor can salvation consist in reducing our active selves by trance to the lifeless immobility of the clod and the pebble. The silence of Samadhi does not abrogate the difficulty, for as soon as the breath comes again into the body, we are once more in action and have toppled down from the heights of this salvation by spiritual slumber. But the true salvation, the release by an inner renunciation of the ego and union with the Purushottama remains steady in whatever state, persists in this world or out of it or in whatever world or out of all world, is self-existent, *sarvathâ vartamâno' pî*, and does not depend upon inaction or action. What then are the actions to be done? The thoroughgoing ascetic answer, not noted by the Gita—it was perhaps not altogether

current at the time—might be that solely begging, eating and meditation are to be permitted among voluntary activities and otherwise only the necessary actions of the body. But the more liberal and comprehensive solution was evidently to continue the three most sattwic activities, sacrifice, giving and askesis. And these certainly are to be done, says the Gita, for they purify the wise. But more generally, and understanding these three things in their widest sense, it is the rightly regulated action, *niyatam karma*, that has to be done, action regulated by the Shastra, the science and art of right knowledge, right works, right living, or regulated by the essential nature, *swabhâva-niyatam karma*, or, finally and best of all, regulated by the will of the Divine within and above us. The last is the true and only action of the liberated man, *muktasya karma*. To renounce these works is not a right movement—the Gita lays that down plainly and trenchantly in the end, *niyatasya tu sannyâsah karmano nopapadyate*. To renounce them from an ignorant confidence in the sufficiency of that withdrawal for the true liberation is a tamasic renunciation. The gunas follow us, we see, into the renunciation of works as well as into works. A renunciation with attachment to inaction, *sango akarmani*, would be equally a tamasic withdrawal. And to give them up because they bring sorrow or are a trouble to the flesh and a weariness to the mind or in the feeling that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, is a rajasic

renunciation and does not bring the high spiritual fruit; that too is not the true tyaga. It is a result of intellectual pessimism or vital weariness, it has its roots in ego. No freedom can come from a renunciation governed by this self-regarding principle.

The sattwic principle of renunciation is to withdraw not from action, but from the personal demand, the ego factor behind it. It is to do works not dictated by desire but by the law of right living or by the essential nature, its knowledge, its ideal, its faith in itself and the Truth it sees, its *çraddhâ*. Or else, on a higher spiritual plane, they are dictated by the will of the Master and done with the mind in Yoga, without any personal attachment either to the action or to the fruit of the action. There must be a complete renunciation of all desire and of all self-regarding egoistic choice and impulse and finally of that much subtler egoism of the will which either says, "The work is mine, I am the doer", or even "The work is God's, but I am the doer." There must be no attachment to pleasant, desirable, lucrative or successful work and no doing of it because it has that nature; but that kind of work too has to be done,—done totally, selflessly, with the assent of the spirit,—when it is the action demanded from above and from within us, *çartavyam çarma*. There must be no aversion to unpleasant, undesirable or ungratifying action or work that brings or is likely to bring with it suffering, danger, harsh conditions, inauspicious consequences; for that too has to be

accepted, totally, selflessly, with a deep understanding of its need and meaning, when it is the work that should be done, *kartavyam karma*. The wise man puts away the shrinkings and hesitations of the desire-soul and the doubts of the ordinary human intelligence, that measurer by little personal, conventional or otherwise limited standards. He follows in the light of the full sattwic mind and with the power of an inner renunciation lifting the soul to impersonality, towards God, towards the universal and eternal the highest ideal law of his nature or the will of the Master of works in his secret spirit. He will not do action for the sake of any personal result or for any reward in this life or with any attachment to success, profit or consequence : neither will his works be undertaken for the sake of a fruit in the invisible hereafter or ask for a reward in other births or in worlds beyond us, the prizes for which the half-baked religious mind hungers. The three kinds of result, pleasant, unpleasant and mixed, in this or other worlds, in this or another life are for the slaves of desire and ego ; these things do not cling to the free spirit. The liberated worker who has given up his works by the inner sannyasa to a greater Power is free from Karma. Action he will do, for some kind of action, less or more, small or great, is inevitable, natural, right for the embodied soul,—action is part of the divine law of living, it is the high dynamics of the Spirit. The essence of renun-

ciation, the true Tyaga, the true Sannyasa is not any rule of thumb of inaction but a disinterested soul, a selfless mind, the transition from ego to the free impersonal and spiritual nature. The spirit of this inner renunciation is the first mental condition of the highest culminating sattwic discipline.

The Gita then speaks of the five causes or indispensable requisites for the accomplishment of works as laid down by the Sankhya. These five are, first, the frame of body, life and mind which are the basis or standing-ground of the soul in Nature, *adhisthâna*, next, the doer, *kartâ*, third, the various instrumentation of Nature, *karana*, fourth, the many kinds of effort which make up the force of action, *chesthâh*, and last, Fate, *daivam*, that is to say, the influence of the Power or powers other than the human factors, other than the visible mechanism of Nature, that stand behind these and modify the work and dispose its fruits in the steps of act and consequence. These five elements make up among them all the efficient causes, *kârana*, that determine the shaping and outcome of whatever work man undertakes with mind and speech and body.

The doer is ordinarily supposed to be our surface personal ego, but that is the false idea of the understanding that has not arrived at knowledge. The ego is the ostensible doer, but the ego and its will are creations and instruments of Nature with which the ignorant understanding wrongly identifies our self and they are not the only determinants even

of human action, much less of its turn and consequence. When we are liberated from ego, our real self behind comes forward, impersonal and universal, and it sees in its self-vision of unity with the universal Spirit universal Nature as the doer of the work and the Divine Will behind as the master of universal Nature. Only so long as we have not this knowledge, are we bound by the character of the ego and its will as the doer and do good and evil and have the satisfaction of our tamasic, rajasic or sattwic nature. But once we live in this greater knowledge, the character and consequences of the work can make no difference to the freedom of the spirit. The work may be outwardly a terrible action like this great battle and slaughter of Kurukshetra; but although the liberated man takes his part in the struggle and though he slay all these peoples, he slays no man and he is not bound by his work, because the work is that of the Master of the Worlds and it is he who has already slain in his hidden omnipotent will all these armies. This work of destruction was needed that humanity might move forward to another creation and a new purpose, might get rid as in a fire of its past karma of unrighteousness and oppression and injustice and move towards a kingdom of the Dharma. The liberated man does his appointed work as the living instrument one in spirit with the universal Spirit. And knowing that all this must be and looking beyond the outward appearance he acts not for self but for God and



## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS

man and the human and cosmic order,\* not in fact himself acting, but conscious of the presence and power of the divine Force in his deeds and their issue. He knows that the supreme Shakti is doing in his mental, vital and physical body, *adhithâna*, as the sole doer the thing appointed by a Fate which is in truth not Fate, not a mechanical dispensation, but the wise and all-seeing Will that is at work behind human Karma. This "terrible work" on which the whole teaching of the Gita turns, is an extreme example of action inauspicious in appearance, *akushalam*, though a great good lies beyond the appearance. Impersonally has it to be done by the divinely appointed man for the holding together of the world purpose, *loka-sangrahârtham*, without personal aim or desire, because it is the appointed service.

It is clear then that the work is not the sole thing that matters; the knowledge in which we do works makes an immense spiritual difference. There are three things, says the Gita, which go to constitute the mental impulsion to works, and they are the knowledge in our will, the object of knowledge and the knower; and into the knowledge there comes always the working of the three gunas. It is this element of the gunas that makes all the difference to our view of the thing known and to the spirit in

\* The cosmic order comes into question, because the triumph of the Asura in humanity means to that extent the triumph of the Asura in the balance of the world-forces.

which the knower does his work. The tamasic ignorant knowledge is a small and narrow, a lazy or dully obstinate way of looking at things which has no eye for the real nature of the world or of the thing done or its field or the act or its conditions. The tamasic mind does not look for real cause and effect, but absorbs itself in one movement or one routine with an obstinate attachment to it, can see nothing but the little section of personal activity before its eyes and does not know in fact what it is doing but blindly lets natural impulsion work out through its deed results of which it has no conception, foresight or comprehending intelligence. The rajasic knowledge is that which sees the multiplicity of things only in their separateness and variety of operation in all these existences and is unable to discover a true principle of unity or rightly co-ordinate its will and action, but follows the bent of ego and desire, the activity of its many-branching egoistic will and various and mixed motive in response to the solicitation of internal and enviroing impulsions and forces. This knowing is a jumble of sections of knowledge, often inconsistent knowledge, put forcefully together by the mind in order to make some kind of pathway through the confusion of our half-knowledge and half-ignorance. Or else it is a restless kinetic multiple action with no firm governing higher ideal and self-possessed law of true light and power within it. The sattwic knowledge on the contrary sees existence as one in-

## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS

divisible whole in all these divisions, one imperishable being in all becoming; it masters the principle of its action and the relation of the particular action to the total purpose of existence; it puts in the right place each step of the complete process. At the highest top of knowledge this seeing becomes the knowledge of the one spirit in the world, one in all these many existences, of the one Master of all works, of the forces of cosmos as expressions of the Godhead and of the work itself as the operation of his supreme will and wisdom in man and his life and essential nature. The personal will has come to be entirely conscious, illumined, spiritually awake, and it lives and works in the One, obeys more and more perfectly his supreme mandate and grows more and more a faultless instrument of his light and power in the human person. The supreme liberated action arrives through this culmination of the sattwic knowledge.

There are again three things, the doer, the instrument and the work done, that hold the action together and make it possible. And here again it is the difference of the gunas that determines the character of each of these elements. The sattwic mind that seeks always for a right harmony and right knowledge is the governing instrument of the sattwic man and moves all the rest of the machine. An egoistic will of desire supported by the desire-soul is the dominant instrument of the rajasic worker. An ignorant instinct or the unenlightened impulsion

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

of the physical mind and the crude vital nature is the chief instrumental force of the tamasic doer of action. The instrument of the liberated man is a greater spiritual light and power, far higher than the highest sattwic intelligence, and it works in him by an enveloping descent from a supraphysical centre and uses as a clear channel of its force a purified and receptive mind, life and body.

Tamasic action is that done with a confused, deluded, ignorant mind, in mechanical obedience to the instincts, impulses and unseeing ideas, without regarding the strength or capacity or the waste and loss of blind misapplied effort or the antecedent and consequence and right conditions of the impulse, effort or labour. Rajasic action is that which a man undertakes under the dominion of desire, with his eyes fixed on the work and its hoped-for fruit and nothing else, or with an egoistic sense of his own personality in the action, and it is done with inordinate effort, with a passionate labour, with a great heaving and straining of the personal will to get at the object of its desire. Sattwic action is that which a man does calmly in the clear light of reason and knowledge and with an impersonal sense of right or duty or the demand of an ideal, as the thing that ought to be done whatever may be the result to himself in this world or another, a work performed without attachment, without liking or disliking for its spur or its drag, for the sole satisfaction of his reason and sense of right, of the lucid intelligence

## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS

and the enlightened will and the pure distinterested mind and the high contented spirit. At the line of culmination of sattwa it will be transformed and become a highest impersonal action dictated by the spirit within us and no longer by the intelligence, an action moved by the highest law of the nature, free from the lower ego and its light or heavy baggage and from limitation even by best opinion, noblest desire, purest personal will or loftiest mental ideal. There will be none of these impedimenta; in their place there will stand a clear spiritual self-knowledge and illumination and an imperative intimate sense of an infallible power that acts and of the work to be done for the world and for the world's Master.

The tamasic doer of action is one who does not put himself really into the work, but acts with a mechanical mind, or obeys the most vulgar thought of the herd, follows the common routine or is wedded to a blind error and prejudice. He is obstinate in stupidity, stubborn in error and takes a foolish pride in his ignorant doing; a narrow and evasive cunning replaces true intelligence; he has a stupid and insolent contempt for those with whom he has to deal, especially for wiser men and his betters. A dull laziness, slowness, procrastination, looseness, want of vigour or of sincerity mark his action. The tamasic man is ordinarily slow to act, dilatory in his steps, easily depressed, ready soon to give up his task if it taxes his strength, his diligence or his

patience. The rajasic doer of action on the contrary is one eagerly attached to the work, bent on its rapid completion, passionately desirous of fruit and reward and consequence, greedy of heart, impure of mind, often violent and cruel and brutal in the means he uses; he cares little whom he injures or how much he injures others so long as he gets what he wants, satisfies his passions and will, vindicates the claims of his ego. He is full of an incontinent joy in success and bitterly grieved and stricken by failure. The sattwic doer is free from all this attachment, this egoism, this violent strength or passionate weakness; his is a mind and will unelated by success, undepressed by failure, full of a fixed impersonal resolution, a calm rectitude of zeal or a high and pure and selfless enthusiasm in the work that has to be done. At and beyond the culmination of sattwa this resolution, zeal, enthusiasm become the spontaneous working of the spiritual Tapas and at last a highest soul-force, the direct God-Power, the mighty and steadfast movement of a divine energy in the human instrument, the self-assured steps of the seer-will, the gnostic intelligence and with it the wide delight of the free spirit in the works of the liberated nature.

The reason armed with the intelligent will works in man in whatever manner or measure he may possess these human gifts and it is accordingly right or perverted, clouded or luminous, narrow and small or large and wide like the mind of its possessor. It is the understanding power of his nature, *buddhi*,

## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS

that chooses the work for him or, more often, approves and sets its sanction on one or other among the many suggestions of his complex instincts, impulses, ideas and desires. It is that which determines for him what is right or wrong, to be done or not to be done, Dharma or Adharma. And the persistence of the will\* is that continuous force of mental Nature which sustains the work and gives it consistence and persistence. Here again there is the incidence of the gunas. The tamasic reason is a false, ignorant and darkened instrument which chains us to see all things in a dull and wrong light, a cloud of misconceptions, a stupid ignoring of the values of things and people. This reason calls light darkness and darkness light, takes what is not the true law and upholds it as the law, persists in the thing which ought not to be done and holds it up to us as the one right thing to be done. Its ignorance is invincible and its persistence of will is a persistence in the satisfaction and dull pride of its ignorance. That is on its side of blind action; but it is pursued also by a heavy stress of inertia and impotence, a persistence in dullness and sleep, an aversion to mental change and progress, a dwelling on the fears and pains and depressions of mind which deter us in our path or keep us to base, weak and cowardly ways. Timidity, shirking, evasion, indolence, the justification by the mind of its fears and false doubts

\* *Dhriti*.

## ESSAYS ON THE GITA

and cautions and refusals of duty and its lapses and turnings from the call of our higher nature, a safe following of the line of least resistance so that there may be the least trouble and effort and peril in the winning of the fruit of our labour—rather no fruit or poor result, it says, than a great and noble toil or a perilous and exacting endeavour and adventure,—these are characteristics of the tamasic will and intelligence.

The rajasic understanding, when it does not knowingly choose error and evil for the sake of the error and evil, can make distinctions between right and wrong, between what should or should not be done, but not rightly, rather with a pulling awry of their true measures and a constant distortion of values. And this is because its reason and will are a reason of the ego and a will of desire, and these powers misrepresent and distort the truth and the right to serve their own egoistic purpose. It is only when we are free from ego and desire and look steadily with a calm, pure, disinterested mind concerned only with the truth and its sequences that we can hope to see things rightly and in their just values. But the rajasic will fixes its persistent attention on the satisfaction of its own attached clingings and desires in its pursuit of interest and pleasure and of what it thinks or chooses to think right and justice, Dharma. Always it is apt to put on these things the construction which will most flatter and justify its desires and to uphold as right or legitimate the



## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS

means which will best help it to get the coveted fruits of its work and endeavour. That is the cause of three fourths of the falsehood and misconduct of the human reason and will. Rajas with its vehement hold on the vital ego is the great sinner and positive misleader.

The sattwic understanding sees in its right place, right form, right measure the movement of the world, the law of action and the law of abstention from action, the thing that is to be done and the thing that is not to be done, what is safe for the soul and what is dangerous, what is to be feared and shunned and what is to be embraced by the will, what binds the spirit of man and what sets it free. These are the things that it follows or avoids by the persistence of its conscious will according to the degree of its light and the stage of evolution it has reached in its upward ascent to the highest self and Spirit. The culmination of this sattwic intelligence is found by a high persistence of the aspiring buddhi when it is settled on what is beyond the ordinary reason and mental will, pointed to the summits, turned to a steady control of the senses and the life and a union by Yoga with man's highest Self, the universal Divine, the transcendent Spirit. It is there that arriving through the sattwic guna one can pass beyond the gunas, can climb beyond the limitations of the mind and its will and intelligence and sattwa itself disappear into that which is above the gunas.

and beyond this instrumental nature. There the soul is enshrined in light and enthroned in firm union with the Self and Spirit and Godhead. Arrived upon that summit we can leave the Highest to guide Nature in our members in the free spontaneity of a divine action : for there there is no wrong or confused working, no element of error or impotence to obscure or distort the luminous perfection and power of the Spirit. All these lower conditions, laws, dharmas cease to have any hold on us ; the Infinite acts in the liberated man and there is no law but the immortal truth and right of the free spirit, no Karma, no kind of bondage.

Harmony and order are the characteristic qualities of the sattwic mind and temperament, quiet happiness, a clear and calm content and an inner ease and peace. Happiness is indeed the one thing which is openly or indirectly the universal pursuit of our human nature,—happiness or its suggestion or some counterfeit of it, some pleasure, some enjoyment, some satisfaction of the mind, the will, the passions or the body. Pain is an experience our nature has to accept when it must, involuntarily as a necessity, an unavoidable incident of universal Nature, or voluntarily as a means to what we seek after, but not a thing desired for its own sake,—except when it is so sought in perversity or with an ardour of enthusiasm in suffering for some touch of fierce pleasure it brings or the intense strength it

engenders. But there are various kinds of happiness or pleasure according to the guna which dominates in our nature. Thus the tamasic mind can remain well-pleased in its indolence and inertia, its stupor and sleep, its blindness and its error. Nature has armed it with the privilege of a smug satisfaction in its stupidity and ignorance, its dim lights of the cave, its inert contentment, its petty or base joys and its vulgar pleasures. Delusion is the beginning of this satisfaction and delusion is its consequence; but still there is given a dull, a by no means admirable but a sufficient pleasure in his delusions to the dweller in the cave. There is a tamasic happiness founded in inertia and ignorance.

The mind of the rajasic man drinks of a more fiery and intoxicating cup; the keen, mobile, active pleasure of the senses and the body and the sense-entangled or fierily kinetic will and intelligence are to him all the joy of life and the very significance of living. This joy is nectar to the lips at the first touch, but there is a secret poison in the bottom of the cup and after it the bitterness of disappointment, satiety, fatigue, revolt, disgust, sin, suffering, loss, transience. And it must be so because these pleasures in their external figure are not the things which the spirit in us truly demands from life; there is something behind and beyond the transience of the form, something that is lasting, satisfying, self-sufficient. What the sattwic nature seeks, therefore, is the satisfaction of the higher mind and the spirit and

when it once gets this large object of its quest, there comes in a clear, pure happiness of the soul, a state of fullness, an abiding ease and peace. This happiness does not depend on outward things, but on ourselves alone and on the flowering of what is best and most inward within us. But it is not at first our normal possession; it has to be conquered by self-discipline, a labour of the soul, a high and arduous endeavour. At first this means much loss of habitual pleasure, much suffering and struggle, a poison born of the churning of our nature, a painful conflict of forces, much revolt and opposition to the change due to the ill-will of the members or the insistence of vital movements, but in the end the nectar of immortality rises in the place of this bitterness and as we climb to the higher spiritual nature we come to the end of sorrow, the euthanasia of grief and pain. That is the surpassing happiness which descends upon us at the point or line of culmination of the sattwic discipline.

The self-exceeding of the sattwic nature comes when we get beyond the great but still inferior sattwic pleasure, beyond the pleasures of mental knowledge and virtue and peace to the eternal calm of the self and the spiritual ecstasy of the divine oneness. That spiritual joy is no longer the sattwic happiness, *sukham*, but the absolute Ananda. Ananda is the secret delight from which all things are born, by which all is sustained in existence and to which all can rise in the spiritual culmination. Only then can it

## THE GUNAS, MIND AND WORKS

be possessed when the liberated man free from ego and its desires lives at last one with his highest self, one with all beings and one with God in an absolute bliss of the spirit.

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## SWABHAVA AND SWADHARMA\*

It is then by a liberating development of the soul out of this lower nature of the triple gunas into the supreme divine nature beyond the three gunas that we can best arrive at spiritual perfection and freedom. And this again can best be brought about by an anterior development of the predominance of the highest sattwic quality to a point at which sattwa also is overpassed, mounts beyond its own limitations and breaks up into a supreme freedom, absolute light, serene power of the conscious spirit in which there is no determination by conflicting gunas. A highest sattwic faith and aim new-shaping what we are according to the highest mental conception of our inner possibilities that we can form in the free intelligence is changed by this transition into a vision of our own real being, a spiritual self-knowledge. A loftiest ideality or standard of dharma, a pursuit of the right law of our natural existence, is transformed into a free, assured self-existent perfection in which all dependence on standards is transcended and the spontaneous law of the immortal self and spirit displaces the lower rule of the instruments and members. The sattwic mind and will change into that spiritual knowledge and

\* Gita XVIII 40—48.

dynamic power of identical existence in which the whole nature puts off its disguise and becomes a free self-expression of the godhead within it. The sattwic doer becomes the Jiva in contact with his source, united with the Purushottama; he is no longer the personal doer of the act, but a spiritual channel of the works of the transcendent and universal Spirit. His natural being transformed and illumined remains to be the instrument of a universal and impersonal action, the bow of the divine Archer. What was sattwic action becomes the free activity of the perfected nature in which there is no longer any personal limitation, any tethering to this or that quality, any bondage of sin and virtue, self and others or any but a supreme spiritual self-determination. That is the culmination of works uplifted to the sole Divine Worker by a God-seeking and spiritual knowledge.

But there is still an incidental question of great importance in the old Indian system of culture and, even apart from that antique view, of considerable general importance, on which we have had some passing pronouncements already by the Gita and which now falls into its proper place. All action on the normal level is determined by the gunas; the action which is to be done, *kartavyam karma*, takes the triple form of giving, askesis and sacrifice, and any or all of these three may assume the character of any of the gunas. Therefore we have to proceed by the raising of these things to the

highest sattwic height of which they are capable and go yet farther beyond to a largeness in which all works become a free self-giving, an energy of the divine Tapas, a perpetual sacrament of the spiritual existence. But this is a general law and all these considerations have been the enunciation of quite general principles and refer indiscriminately to all actions and to all men alike. All can eventually arrive by spiritual evolution to this strong discipline, this large perfection, this highest spiritual state. But while the general rule of mind and action is the same for all men, we see too that there is a constant law of variation and each individual acts not only according to the common laws of the human spirit, mind, will, life, but according to his own nature; each man fulfils different functions or follows a different bent according to the rule of his own circumstances, capacities, turn, character, powers. What place is to be assigned to this variation, this individual rule of nature in the spiritual discipline?

The Gita has laid some stress on this point and even assigned to it a great preliminary importance. At the very start it has spoken of the nature, rule and function of the Kshatriya as Arjuna's own law of action, *swadharma*\*; it has proceeded to lay it down with a striking emphasis that one's own nature, rule, function should be observed and followed,—even if defective, it is better than the

\* II. 31. *swadharmaṁ api chāvekṣhya.*



well-performed rule of another's nature. Death in one's own law of nature is better for a man than victory in an alien movement. To follow the law of another's nature is dangerous to the soul,† contradictory, as we may say, to the natural way of his evolution, a thing mechanically imposed and therefore imported, artificial and sterilising to one's growth towards the true stature of the spirit. What comes out of the being is the right and healthful thing, the authentic movement, not what is imposed on it from outside or laid on it by life's compulsions or the mind's error. This swadharma is of four general kinds formulated outwardly in the action of the four orders of the old Indian social culture, *châturvarnya*. That system corresponds, says the Gita, to a divine law, it "was created by me according to the divisions of the gunas and works,"—created from the beginning by the Master of existence. In other words, there are four distinct orders of the active nature, or four fundamental types of the soul in nature, *swabhâva*, and the work and proper function of each human being corresponds to his type of nature. This is now finally explained in preciser detail. The works of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, says the Gita, are divided according to the qualities (*gunas*) born of their own inner nature, spiritual temperament, essential character, (Swabhava).

† III. 35.

Calm, self-control, askesis, purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance of spiritual truth are the work of the Brahmin, born of his swabhava. Heroism, high spirit, resolution, ability, not fleeing in the battle, giving, lordship (*īshwara-bhâva*, the temperament of the ruler and leader) are the natural work of the Kshatriya. Agriculture, cattle-keeping, trade inclusive of the labour of the craftsman and the artisan are the natural work of the Vaishya. All work of the character of service falls within the natural function of the Shudra. A man, it goes on to say, who devotes himself to his own natural work in life acquires spiritual perfection, not indeed by the mere act itself, but if he does it with right knowledge and the right motive, if he can make it a worship of the Spirit of this creation and dedicate it sincerely to the Master of the universe from whom is all impulse to action. All labour, all action and function, whatever it be, can be consecrated by this dedication of works, can convert the life into a self-offering to the Godhead within and without us and is itself converted into a means of spiritual perfection. But a work not naturally one's own, even though it may be well performed, may look better from the outside when judged by an external and mechanical standard or may lead to more success in life, is still inferior as a means of subjective growth precisely because it has an external motive and a mechanical impulsion. One's own natural work is better, even if it looks from some other point of view defective.

## SWABHAVA AND SWADHARMA

One does not incur sin or stain when one acts in the true spirit of the work and in agreement with the law of one's own nature. All action in the three *gunas* is imperfect, all human work is subject to fault, defect or limitation ; but that should not make us abandon our own proper work and natural function. Action should be rightly regulated action, *niyatam karma*, but intrinsically one's own, evolved from within, in harmony with the truth of one's being, regulated by the Swabhava, *swabhâva-niyatam karma*.

What precisely is the intention of the Gita? Let us take it first in its more outward meaning and consider the tinge given to the principle it enounces by the ideas of the race and the time—the hue of the cultural environment, the ancient significance. These verses and the earlier pronouncements of the Gita on the same subject have been seized upon in current controversies on the caste question and interpreted by some as a sanction of the present system, used by others as a denial of the hereditary basis of caste. In point of fact the verses in the Gita have no bearing on the existing caste system, because that is a very different thing from the ancient social ideal of *chaturvarna*, the four clear-cut orders of the Aryan community, and in no way corresponds with the description of the Gita. Agriculture, cattle-keeping and trade of every kind are said here to be the work of the Vaishya ; but in the later system the majority of those concerned in trade and in cattle-

keeping, artisans, small craftsmen and others are actually classed as Shudras—where they are not put altogether outside the pale,—and, with some exceptions, the merchant class is alone and that too not everywhere ranked as Vaishya. Agriculture, government and service are the professions of all classes from the Brahmin down to the Shudra. And if the economical divisions of function have been confounded beyond any possibility of rectification, the law of the guna or quality is still less a part of the later system. There all is rigid custom, *âchâra*, with no reference to the need of the individual nature. If again we take the religious side of the contention advanced by the advocates of the caste system, we can certainly fasten no such absurd idea on the words of the Gita as that it is a law of a man's nature that he shall follow without regard to his personal bent and capacities the profession of his parents or his immediate or distant ancestors, the son of a milkman be a milkman, the son of a doctor a doctor, the descendants of shoemakers remain shoemakers to the end of measurable time, still less that by doing so, by this unintelligent and mechanical repetition of the law of another's nature without regard to his own individual call and qualities a man automatically farther his own perfection and arrives at spiritual freedom. The Gita's words refer to the ancient system of *chaturvarna*, as it existed or was supposed to exist in its ideal purity,—there is some controversy whether it was ever anything more than

an ideal or general norm more or less loosely followed in practice,—and it should be considered in that connection alone. Here too there is considerable difficulty as to the exact outward significance.

The ancient system of the four orders had a triple aspect ; it took a social and economic, a cultural and a spiritual appearance. On the economic side it recognised four functions of the social man in the community, the religious and intellectual, the political, the economic and the servile functions. There are thus four kinds of works, the work of religious ministration, letters, learning and knowledge, the work of government, politics, administration and war, the work of production, wealth-making and exchange, the work of hired labour and service. An endeavour was made to found and stabilise the whole arrangement of society on the partition of these four functions among four clearly marked classes. This system was not peculiar to India, but was with certain differences the dominating feature of a stage of social evolution in other ancient or mediaeval societies. The four functions are still inherent in the life of all normal communities, but the clear divisions no longer exist anywhere. The old system everywhere broke down and gave place to a more fluid order or, as in India, to a confused and complex social rigidity and economic immobility degenerating towards a chaos of castes. Along with this economic division there existed the association of a cultural idea which gave to each class its

religious custom, its law of honour, ethical rule, suitable education and training, type of character, family ideal and discipline. The facts of life did not always correspond to the idea,—there is always a certain gulf found between the mental ideal and the vital and physical practice,—but there was a constant and strenuous endeavour to keep up as much as possible a real correspondence. The importance of this attempt and of the cultural ideal and atmosphere it created in the past training of the social man, can hardly be put too high; but at the present day it has little more than a historical, a past and evolutionary significance. Finally, wherever this system existed, it was given more or less a religious sanction (more in the East, very little in Europe) and in India a profounder spiritual use and significance. This spiritual significance is the real kernel of the teaching of the Gita.

The Gita found this system in existence and its ideal in possession of the Indian mind and it recognised and accepted both the ideal and system and its religious sanction. “The fourfold order was created by me,” says Krishna “according to the divisions of quality and active function.” On the mere strength of this phrase it cannot altogether be concluded that the Gita regarded this system as an eternal and universal social order. Other ancient authorities did not so regard it; rather they distinctly state that it did not exist in the beginning and will collapse in a later age of the cycle. Still we may

understand from the phrase that the fourfold function of social man was considered as normally inherent in the psychological and economic needs of every community and therefore a dispensation of the Spirit that expresses itself in the human corporate and individual existence. The Gita's line is in fact an intellectual rendering of the well-known symbol in the Vedic Purusha-Sukta. But what then should be the natural basis and form of practice of these functions? The practical basis in ancient times came to be the hereditary principle. A man's social function and position were no doubt determined originally, as they are still in freer, less closely ordered communities by environment, occasion, birth and capacity; but as there set in a more fixed stratification, his rank came practically to be regulated by birth mainly or alone and in the later system of caste birth came to be the sole rule of status. The son of a Brahmin is always a Brahmin in status, though he may have nothing of the typical Brahmin qualities or character, no intellectual training or spiritual experience or religious worth or knowledge, no connection whatever with the right function of his class, no Brahminhood in his work and no Brahminhood in his nature.

This was an inevitable evolution, because the external signs are the only ones which are easily and conveniently determinable and birth was the most handy and manageable in an increasingly mechanised, complex and conventional social order. For a time the possible disparity between the hereditary

fiction and the individual's real inborn character and capacity was made up or minimised by education and training : but eventually this effort ceased to be sustained and the hereditary convention held absolute rule. The ancient lawgivers, while recognising the hereditary practice, insisted that quality, character and capacity were the one sound and real basis and that without them the hereditary social status became an unspiritual falsehood because it had lost its true significance. The Gita too, as always, founds its thought on the inner significance. It speaks indeed in one verse of the work born with a man, *sahajam karma* ; but this does not in itself imply a hereditary basis. According to the Indian theory of rebirth, which the Gita recognises, a man's inborn nature and course of life are essentially determined by his own past lives, are the self-development already effected by his past actions and mental and spiritual evolution and cannot depend solely on the material factor of his ancestry, parentage, physical birth, which can only be of subordinate moment, one effective sign perhaps, but not the dominant principle. The word *sahaja* means that which is born with us, whatever is natural, inborn, innate ; its equivalent in all other passages is *swabhâvaja*. The work or function of a man is determined by his qualities, *karma* is determined by *guna* ; it is the work born of his Swabhava, *swabhâvajam karma*, and regulated by his Swabhava, *swabhâva-niyatam karma*. This emphasis on an inner quality and spirit which finds expression in